

COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 205

Board of Education

5:00 PM – Monday, April 7, 2014

932 Harrison Street—Galesburg, Illinois

Special Meeting

Agenda

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Closed Session
 - A. Review Closed Meeting Minutes
- IV. Old Business
 - A. Silas Willard Plan
- V. Adjournment

Next Regular Meeting will be April 14, 2014

Community Unit School District No. 205
April 7, 2014

Old Business IV. A:

Silas Willard Plan

Background:

In September of last year, the board approved moving forward with the replacement of the Silas Willard building. Through extraordinary efforts by administration and architects, the life safety replacement bond financing was verbally approved by ISBE. On Monday, March 31, ISBE called to say that they had read in the paper comments by the board that seem to indicate to them that the board was no longer interested in replacing the Silas Willard building. ISBE has agreed to delay the final decision until the board, "makes up their mind." Therefore, we have requested this special Board of Education meeting to again discuss renovation vs. new construction. The administration is also proposing two additional options. One thing that has been made very clear by ISBE is that the board needs to make a final decision. If ISBE were to sign off on the project, the board would have one year from the date of that approval to perform all of the life safety repairs which are categorized as "Priority A" (this includes most of the repairs on the life safety violation list). If these repairs were not completed within the one year, the building could be condemned any occupancy permit revoked. If ISBE denies the life safety replacement bonds proposal based on their belief that the majority of the board is not committed to the project, new construction will no longer be an option.

At the last board meeting, grade level centers were introduced as a possibility. However, because of the size of the elementary buildings and the fact that one has already undergone a \$6 million renovation , it seems clear that Galesburg 205 has already committed to continuing the model of smaller neighborhood K-5 schools. It would require major renovation and expansion of most of the buildings in order to configure them to be able to house entire grade levels.

With regard to Silas, the board previously focused its discussion on two options. Option 1 (\$20,507,000) involves totally renovating the current Silas building, tearing down and rebuilding the gymnasium, and adding another wing with a cafeteria. Option 2 (\$18,360,000) was building an entirely new Silas Willard building at the current Silas Willard site and tearing down the old building upon the completion of the new construction. Due to the fact that some Board of Education members have publicly professed a desire to explore less costly options, we have developed Option 3 (currently being developed by Russell Construction – will be presented the night of the special Board meeting - preliminary cost estimates show that this could indeed be a workable plan with significant savings), relocating Silas Willard to the current Lincoln School site while moving the administrative offices to the Technology Learning Center, and Option 4 (\$7 million), doing only what is necessary to correct life safety issues at the existing Silas Willard building and making it handicapped accessible. The following details include some of the benefits and challenges of all four options.

Option 1 benefits: preserves part of the current building which some in the community feel has historical significance due to the fact that Ronald Reagan attended school there. The school would remain at the current Silas Willard site.

Option 1 challenges: it's a very old building that has been built onto multiple times. Renovation is fraught with difficulties due to old building standards. As we found with renovating other older buildings, there are constant construction surprises and many costs associated with trying to work with existing, very old construction. As we have experienced with Lombard, even after millions of dollars has been poured into the building, in many ways the building still shows its age. The biggest challenge is the fact that there is nowhere for the students to be housed during the time that their classrooms, hallways, etc. are being renovated. Finally, the construction estimates show that renovation of the old building will cost \$2 million more than new construction. These estimates are based on the experience in actual costs associated with the renovations of Lombard Junior High.

Option 2 benefits: students and community are presented with a brand-new, 21st-century school at the current Silas Willard location. Students are able to attend the old building while the new construction is completed.

Option 2 challenges: the current Silas Willard site is small in size meaning that the new building will have to be two stories in order to provide sufficient square footage to house the Silas Willard population (including those currently housed at other schools due to crowding issues at Silas). Playground space may be tight until the old building can be demolished.

Option 3 benefits: maintains the appearance of frugality by using the current Lincoln School building and providing a use for the Technology Learning Center. The Lincoln School site is significantly larger than Silas Willard's thereby allowing ample room for expansion. The new Silas/Lincoln school would use materials in the front to make it look somewhat similar to Steele School. Although the gymnasium would not be in the front, there are multiple ways to make it look similar and still put the gymnasium in a place that makes sense for this particular building.

Option 3 challenges: Lincoln School is located adjacent to railroad tracks where trains regularly haul tanker cars during the daytime when children would be present. Because train tracks divide the location of Lincoln School from the majority of the population center for Silas Willard, almost all of the students would have to be bussed.

***NOTE: expanding Cooke School in a manner similar to what is being proposed as Option 3 for Lincoln School was considered. However, because Cooke School is so much smaller than any of the other cookie-cutter schools, it would basically require building an entirely new building at that site. If we were going to build an entirely new school, it would not make sense to do it at a site other than the current site of Silas-Willard. As the entire point of proposing an option 3 was to provide a more cost-effective option, using the Cooke School site made no sense.*

Option 4 benefits: it is the least expensive option. This option will make happy those who have been advocating for preserving the original building.

Option 4 challenges: those students who are currently being bussed to other schools due to crowding issues at Silas Willard will continue to be displaced. This will do nothing to address anything aesthetic other than to repair any damage made to install required life safety or accessibility. The basic building configuration will remain. There will be no air-conditioning. It essentially puts \$7 million into a building that will look very similar to what exists today. At least some of the life safety repairs will have to be made while students are present. They could displace classrooms. No cost was included for dealing with displaced students and no plan exists for an alternate location to hold classes during the repair process.

Recommended Action:

Choose One of the Actions—Approve as Presented